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ABSTRACT

Women in the Caribbean share many different commonalities, but their experiences vary by culture and the socioeconomic development and infrastructure of the country in which they reside. The 44 women who participated in a study were all full-time faculty from the University of the West Indies, Mona, St. Augustine, and Cave Hill campuses located in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados. According to "Women in the Caribbean Project," Caribbean women rank high in status overall, when compared to other developed and underdeveloped nations. This paper examines the cultural constructs of race, gender, and class, and their application in Caribbean society in an effort to articulate a framework for understanding the current positionalities of Caribbean faculty women. The paper discusses the status of Caribbean faculty women. It focuses on hearing the truths of these women, paying particular attention to issues that emerged which document collective experiences, explain the intersecting of race, gender, and class, reconceptualize the role and challenges of Caribbean women in the home or academia, and illuminate paths not yet taken. The paper presents a hybrid framework that is grounded in elements of black feminist theory, but rests upon Caribbean culture as articulated by Caribbean scholars based on Caribbean history, tradition, and structure. (Contains 37 references and 4 notes.) (BT)

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The Cultural Constructs of Race, Gender, and Class: A Study of How Afro Caribbean and Indo Caribbean Women Academics Negotiate Their Careers

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Women in the Caribbean share many different commonalities, but their experiences vary by both culture and the socioeconomic development and infrastructure of the country from which they reside. For example, Barbados is regarded as the most 'developed' Caribbean country, while St. Vincent is considered the least developed (Senior, 1990). Other important factors that account for differences include differences between women from rural and urban areas, those of various races and classes, and between age groups. Regardless of these variations, however, there is a point at which the history and culture of the country coalescences into what can be called a Caribbean culture. Therefore, the wealth of shared elements allows us to make generalizations about Caribbean women.

The forty-four women who were participants in this study, were all full-time faculty from the University of the West Indies, Mona, St. Augustine, and Cave Hill campuses located in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados respectively. According to 'Women in the Caribbean Project' (WICP), Caribbean women rank high in status, overall, when compared to other developed and undeveloped nations. For example, in a ranking of women from 99 various countries, Jamaica, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados--the three largest Caribbean nations--were ranked 15th, 23rd, and 36th respectively in terms of social equality. Jamaica was ranked second in the world for education and Barbados was ranked fifth for employment status of women (Population Crisis Committee, 1988). However, the majority of women in the Caribbean still remain in subordinate jobs within their societies, continue to work long hours inside and outside the home, make extreme sacrifices for their children and family, and often endure unsupportive partners for the benefit of the family (Senior, 1990).

> Rapid changes over the past thirty years or so means that race is perhaps a less significant indicator with socio-economic status, but the social and economic structure is still shaped like a pyramid, and while some women are moving upwards, and very rapidly too, most women remain at the bottom" (Senior, 1990, p. 187).

Demographically, Jamaica is the largest island in the Caribbean and is a little more than twice the size (in square miles) of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and more than 26 times the size of Barbados. The population of Jamaica is 2.4 million, as compared to 1.25 million in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and only 259,000 in Barbados (United Nations, 2000). The Jamaican people are mostly of African descent with respectively smaller numbers of European, Arabic, Chinese, or East Indian descent. As a nation, the population of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is divided roughly in equal numbers of African and East Indian descendents, with much smaller percentages of Chinese, European, and Syrian people. Whereas the population of Barbados is about 70 percent Black, 20 percent mixed, 7 percent White, and 3 percent immigrant. Barbados also has the lowest illiteracy rate in the Caribbean at less than one (.9) percent, as compared to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at 9.7 percent and Jamaica at 4.5 percent. Geographically, the Caribbean islands are part of the Americas, though politically and socially it is most closely associated with the United Kingdom (Braithwaite, 1975).

Blacks throughout the Caribbean and African Diaspora share similar experiences of oppression and domination, and have developed shared coping mechanisms or what WICP terms 'making do.' It is because of these shared experiences that for purposes of this article, the term Bla k was selected to illustrate the connection among all Black women throughout the Caribbean and African Diaspora. These mechanisms reflect great strength, resilience, and growth, but to varying degrees. These *positionalities*, defined as race, gender, class and "other aspects of our identities as markers of relational positions, rather than essential qualities" (Maher and Tetreault, 1993, p. 118) are constructed and reconstructed through the process of social interaction. They are closely tied to two important things, cultural factors and social stratification. "Women in the Caribbean will only make marginal gains if the issue of gender is dealt with in isolation. The issues of class, race, and gender cannot be isolated in any strategy for achieving an equitable and humane order in the Caribbean societies" (Wiltshire-Brodber, p. 155).

The first factor, culture, including the significance of race, ethnicity, and class, plays a crucial role in the socialization process because it is often expressed by the ideas and values of society. Some cultures are homogeneous, sharing the same norms and values. Culture is defined as the rituals, behavior and organizations that distinguish particular groups of people and are handed down from generation to generation. People from the English-speaking Caribbean are more complex because society is held together by common institutions, but different cultures with varied and sometimes competing value systems (Senior, 1990). Furthermore, the socialization process in the multicultural Caribbean is exacerbated by the fact that people often fluctuate between two or more racial and cultural ideals. The result for many is severe cultural imbalance (Brathwaite, 1975). For this reason, the socialization of the Caribbean people can be contradictory (Henriques, 1953) and full of tension (Hodge, 1982).

For women in the Caribbean,

> The cultural expectations regarding motherhood is central to an understanding of the lives of Caribbean women because the choices they make in terms of childbearing will ultimately influence all their interactions in society; it will affect their schooling, their job opportunities, their personal autonomy, their relations with men, and their participation in the wider society" (Senior, 1990, p. 188).

For example, Stromquist (1989) has argued that cultural norms and division of labor within the home serve as a detriment to girls, who are defined primarily as future mothers. Although women in higher socioeconomic classes experience less restriction in gaining access to higher education, the cultural norms still limit their professional choices. She further ascertains that the school experience of most young women provide messages and practices that reinforce, rather than challenge the sexual division of labor. While education certainly does not assure women access to jobs, the absence of such diminishes their chance of attaining formal employment and well-remunerated occupations. Furthermore, while socioeconomic factors do continue to limit or enhance educational progress, there are also internal barriers to women's career

ascendancy (Senior, 2000). For example, women in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago claim 58 percent and 53 percent, respectively, of the primary and secondary level school teachers, but only make up 34 percent of the principals and vice principals combined. The case is similar for women throughout the Caribbean (Barrow, 1996).

For Caribbean faculty women who were the subjects of this study, teaching was the primary work activity although research was required. None reported being overburdened with student advising, but almost half mentioned having more committee work than they would have liked. This can be explained, in part, by the following. Caribbean faculty reported: 1) greater autonomy in their departments and college; 2) having more dependents (children and elderly parents) living at home which required their attention; 3) more opportunities for international travel (roughly a minimum of $7,000 U.S. for travel per academic year) which precluded them from spending much time on campus; 4) and having more centralized academic departments which handled many administrative and advising functions. These women had higher rates of job satisfaction and were more likely to be tenured, although they reported having greater external barriers than their African American sisters in the states. This may be attributed to the lack of mobility options in the Caribbean and the ability to seek tenure more than once. More than 70 percent of the women surveyed had international teaching or research experience, and a third had obtained a graduate degree in a country other than the Caribbean (Gregory, 1999).

Though women head one-third of all households in the Caribbean, many in the workplace are relegated to low-paying service occupations. Women are concentrated at the lowest levels of the income brackets (primarily in the service sector and domestics), while the top management and professional levels are occupied by men. In the professional category, women cluster around the nursing and teaching fields (Gordon, 1986). While studies indicate that the Caribbean education system provides equal access to boys and girls, the reality is that girls are still funneled into the non-technical, non-scientific fields, at a time when the economy demands more skilled technical and scientific workers (Harding, 1985).

The second factor is social stratification, which in the Caribbean, is inextricably linked to skin color and ethnicity. Ethnic differentiation of social class is most often marked by skin color and racial lines among ethnic groups. The upper-class mostly consisted of White Europeans, while the darkest skinned people were at the bottom end of the social scale. Light-skinned middle-class Blacks, referred to as Coloureds[1], were located in the middle of the social hierarchy Because of the importance placed on class within the social structure, many people sought to gain upward mobility and increased status through marriage. Braithwaite (1975) explains:

> The social structure was clearly founded on an ascriptive particularistic basis. It was based on the one hand on the positive evaluation of the white group and, on the other, of a negative evaluation of the black group. The other groups which entered the system, therefore, sought to differentiate themselves from the black group as much as possible, even if acceptance by the white group appeared to some of these groups as an

> impossibility, or a very distant possibility. In other words, the fact that the social order was based on ascriptive values did not escape the other groups. Ethnic affiliation and ethnic purity were the values upon which the social stratification system was erected and, therefore, this served as a positive encouragement to non-Negro groups to try to retain their ethnic identify (p. 43-44).

In the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, for example, the ethnic groups in rank order from historically perceived superiority to inferiority are White (European, mostly from Great Britain), Coloured (light-skinned and brown people), Black (dark brown-skinned), East Indian (descendent of India, to be differentiated from West Indians from the Caribbean), Chinese (from China), Portuguese (descendent of Portugal) and Syrian (usually from Syria, but also loosely referred to anyone from an Arab country) (Braithwaite, 1975). Of all ethnic groups, the Chinese were the first to be accepted by white Caribbean society, mostly due to their light skin color, "good hair," and mild temperment (Braithwaite, 1975). "Specific instructions are given for children not only not to associate with the lower class children—where a greater number of dark-skinned persons will be found—but also not to associate with dark-skinned middle class persons" (Braithwaite, 1975, p. 100). These ethnic distinctions is essentially based on skin color and to a lesser degree, ethnicity. Generally, the status of the kinship group is primarily derived from the occupational and social status of the father, although the mother's authority in the home is supreme. Due to the large numbers of immigrants coming to Trinidad in the 1950s, in a much more developed and over-populated area, the Trinidad government institutes legal barriers against free-immigration when the island "ceased to be under-developed" (Braithwaite, p. 3). Despite this and other efforts against illegal immigration, nearly 11,000 illegal immigrants from other West Indian islands were reported to be residing permanently in Trinidad. The effects of immigration were masked due to the similar aspects of race and culture between the immigrant groups, especially among the Europeans and among the West Indian immigrants.

This article begins with an examination of the cultural constructs of race, gender, and class, and their application in Caribbean society in an effort to articulate a framework for understanding the current positionalities of Caribbean faculty women. The second portion of this article discusses the status of Caribbean faculty women. The third and greatest portion of this piece devotes itself to hearing the 'truths' of these women, paying particular attention to issues that emerged which documents collective experiences, explains the intersecting of race, gender and class, reconceptualizes the role and challenges of Caribbean women in the home or academia, and illuminates paths not yet taken. This article presents a hybrid framework that is grounded in elements of Black Feminist Theory (Collins, 1989), but rests upon Caribbean culture as articulated by Caribbean scholars based on Caribbean history, tradition, and structure (Barrow, 1996; Braithwaite, 1975; Mohammed and Shepherd, 1991; Senior, 1990). Caribbean culture and Black Feminist Theory will provide the foundation for the structural analysis and epistemology to interpret the experiences, and personal and career choices of Caribbean faculty women.

RACE, GENDER AND CLASS

According to Marable (2001), racism and sexism combined with classism produces a three-pronged mode of oppression for women of color. He suggests that both behaviors are learned within a social framework. Yet some Black women have been successful in coping with them. In fact, Myers (2002) has found that there is a specific, causal relationship between what we think of ourselves and how we cope. The more self-worth we feel, the greater our ability to cope (Myers, 2000). Collins (1989) has also shown that many Black women retain a remarkably high sense of self-worth despite challenging circumstances. She argues that "it is through this power of self-definition, that Black women intellectuals have explored this private, hidden space of their consciousness that allows them to cope with, and in many cases, transcend the confines of gender, class, and race oppression" (pp. 92-93).

Race

This paper focuses on three major ascribed statuses—race, gender, and class. In the Caribbean, it is hard to speak about race without also considering skin color because it is an important element for status ordering, power and dominance. Since the 'privileged' were White, their 'color' symbolized power.

> Colour became an important commodity acquired and traded as a passport to improved status and job enhancement. 'Putting milk in the coffee' by marrying someone of lighter complexion was a strategy which both Caribbean men and women understood very clearly. The coloured woman was anxious to differentiate herself from the black woman whom she perceived as being inferior in status… Standards of beauty still rest heavily on how closely it approximates to the European ideal, thus reinforcing a racial dimension to the issue of gender and status. Economic control still rests primarily in the hands of Whites and Coloureds. Race, class, and colour thus cut squarely across gender, depriving the issue of gender relations in themselves of any force for radicalism and change (Wiltshire-Brodber, 1988, p. 145).

For Caribbean faculty women, especially the older women in the study, gender, race and colour were most important when they first began their academic careers and tried to carve out non-traditional and often unpopular research agendas. For other women, these ascribed statuses mostly became an issue as they traveled outside of the Caribbean to attend conferences, meetings, and other professional activities. None of the women spoke about consciously marrying to acquire a higher status, but some that will be introduced later, do discuss feeling as though the outcomes of their academic futures rested in the hands of whites, who may have been influenced by their gender or ethnicity. All of the women appeared to be secure and

proud of who they were as Black or Indian women, although they faced numerous challenges in their professional and personal lives.

With regard to race, the experiences of Caribbean women are often compared to women in the United States. Smith (1996) asserts:

> There is a scale of color values [in Caribbean society] in which the 'white' European is given a positive value, and the 'black' or Negro is given negative value, and this serves as the basis for the hierarchical rankings of persons, and groups of persons, according to the 'color' characteristics ascribed to them. But Caribbean women of color experience a twofold disadvantage, generally occupying a lower position in society on account of both race and gender (p. 79).

Gender

In 1977, Edholm, Harris and Young conducted a study to conceptualize women. They defined this conceptualization as the social construction of maleness and femaleness and argued that the concept allowed for the analyses of women's issues to go beyond the limitation of biology, in order to provide the space necessary to accept the specificities of history, time and culture (Mohamed, 1992). Generally speaking, women conceptualize themselves very differently then men and their roles depend a great deal on their own socialization (Senior, 1990). For example, women constantly face role conflict when making decisions because they directly affect her family. The ways in which her family life may be affected by her decisions, continually acts as a powerful constraint. In addition, lack of support in the home and often lack of professional support from others, including other women, contributes to the feeling of isolation and lack of professional validation (Gregory, 1999).

The experiences of Caribbean women have recently been compared to those experiences of North American women because of various political, economic, racial and gender inequities that have plagued both societies. However, there are many aspects of Caribbean society that are unique to the region. One aspect involves the concept of the "matrifocal family," which refers to a family in which there is a lack of a significant male figure and allows for the mother (the matriarch) to become the focus of the family group. Some feminist theorists have studied this in comparison to the traditional, patriarchal family characteristics of Western societies. The importance of the matrifocal family resides in the power it extends to women-headed households in the Caribbean. Caribbean society is unique in that the absence of the father in the family unit allows the mother to assume decision-making authority and form very strong bonds with her children, rather than serving to weaken the family unit that often occurs in Western society.

Class

The concept of class was originally introduced to make distinctions between people based on the interests they represented in society. It is important to note that class formation differs from group to group and

classes continue to change as they are influenced by other social factors such as prior class relationships, kinship, and racial division. We should also be reminded that the Caribbean culture was forever changed when the Westerners who inhabited the islands formed the capitalist class system and provided pressure from both the colonial state and the foreign capital. These historical events created a new distinction known as 'race,' which became an important factor in the formation of class in the Caribbean (Senior, 1990)

Class is still of tremendous importance in Caribbean society, despite current events and more open attitudes about skin color and ethnicity. Specifically, the perceptions of class are still prominent because of the role it plays in determining power and status. In the Caribbean, the family is primarily responsible for transmitting the values of society regarding skin color and racial values (Braithwaite, 1975). The mother is the critical link for determining class because she has--in the past--carried the burden of moving the family to a higher professional status. Senior (1990) has reported

> Many (women) have lightened the skin color of their children by marrying a fairer-skinned spouse or raised their status through marriage to men of high professional status. Not only do children learn racial values through unconscious assumptions of maternal values, but there is also sometimes explicit indoctrination by the mother, who defines who are desirable playmates and why, based on skin color and hair quality" (p. 100).

As you might expect, the importance of class in the Caribbean has greatly impacted the social relations. In Young's study (1988) on the social relations of gender in the Caribbean, she states

> In societies marked by upward mobility, men, and often older women of the upper class, take great care to structure their daughters' social lives so as to ensure they meet only 'suitable' partners. This strategy frequently involves only encouraging them in extravagant patterns of consumption limiting their sense of agency, restricting their intellectual horizons, and instilling in them a fear of outsider males which borders on the pathological. As these examples indicate, a complex and dense net involving strands of race, class, and gender is tightly woven around the control of women's sexuality, their generative capacity, as well as their capacity for labour.... We know something about how women manage to reproduce within their children strong class identities but not much about how this interacts with the capital-labour relation to maintain class stability or to undermine it" (p. 108).

In this paper, I will view class in terms of the inequality it denotes in the sphere of social relations in order to articulate it's relationship with gender. In addition, personal narratives will be incorporated to provide what Collins (1998) refers to as "a distinctive set of experiences" (p. 339) that are common for all Black women regardless of their occupation and ethnicity, because all Black women endure race, class and gender

oppression to varying degrees. However, to fully respect and appreciate the unique experiences and lives of Caribbean women, the cultural traditions, history and culture of the Caribbean family (Barrow, 1996; Braithwaite, 1975; Mohammed and Shepherd, 1991; Senior, 1990) will provide the structural framework for this study.

METHODOLOGY

University of the West Indies Faculty Women

The primary goal of the study was to recognize, document, and analyze the impact of race, gender, and class on the personal and professional choices of Caribbean faculty women. This interpretation through Caribbean culture and elements of Black Feminist Theory, allow participants to define their own reality, hear their 'truths,' and validate their collective experiences. Vanessa Siddle-Walker (1999) warns researchers to "do not hard rather than make an overt attempt to do them good" (p. 229). As women of color, it is especially important that we conscientiously protect those whom we study, by being responsible for and responsive to our research participants.

To address the three ascribed statuses described in the previous section, I investigated a group of forty-four (44) Caribbean faculty women from the University of the West Indies (UWI) on the Mona campus in Jamaica, the Cave Hill campus in Barbados and the campus of St. Augustine in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Centre for Gender and Developmental Studies[2] on all three campuses coordinated my month-long project as a Visiting Scholar. The University of the West Indies System is an autonomous regional institution supported by and serving 15 different countries in the West Indies, including Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, the Grenadines, and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to the three main campuses, the University has centers in all of its non-campus Caribbean countries. Of the major professional programs, the schools of medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, agriculture and engineering are located at St. Augustine, law at Cave Hill and medical sciences at Mona.

Instrumentation and data collection

The purpose of this article was to listen to the voices of Caribbean faculty women and their experiences with race, gender, and class oppression. To accomplish this task, I borrowed Collins (2000) Black Feminist Theory and applied a range of data gathering methods (from an 8-page, 68-item survey instrument, to in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups utilizing a conversations approach with a set of 26 open-ended questions). Collin's (2000) conceptual framework of Black feminist thought provided a bird's-eye view of the everyday experiences of "ordinary" black women. Black Feminist Theory is grounded on the premise that all Black women share certain commonalities, perceptions and experiences. However,

based on differences of class, region, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation affecting individual Black women's lives, the themes expressed by these women may vary. These individual themes are not new, but collectively examined through Caribbean epistemology, they serve to challenge existing approaches to the study of gender, race, and class oppression. This paper addresses Black Feminist Theory as an element of a structural framework based on Caribbean culture that can be used to theorize and examine the ways in which race, gender and class influence the behaviors and choices of Caribbean women scholars.

The faculty women were selected based solely on race, ethnicity, faculty status, and willingness to participate. All women had currently held a full-time, tenure-track faculty position or an administrative post with an active faculty line (taught at least one course each academic year) in their respective departments. Women on the three UWI campuses were requested to participate through departmental chairpersons and those who agreed made themselves available. I initially made contact with agreeable participants through electronic mail (e-mail) to provide them with a description of the study, a copy of the questionnaire, and to make preliminary arrangements to meet. The women in this study reflects a diverse set of lived experiences in terms of age, religion, sexual orientation, family background, professional standing, marital status, and socioeconomic status, although they are all Caribbean faculty and scholars. They also represent a diverse set of circumstances, and personal histories.

In a three-stage process, I initially conducted two-hour, face-to-face interviews with forty-four (44) faculty women of Indian, or African descent. Second, I examined each scholars open-ended responses (to questions such as, "What it was like for them growing up?", "How they came to understand and experience race, gender and class differences?", "What academic, professional and personal choices were made as they negotiated their careers?", "What their current priorities, inspirations, and challenges are today?", and other personal experiences that help to shape their lives) to gain further insight into their experiences. Finally, I conducted more comprehensive, in-depth, face-to-face interviews with six (6) of the original 44 women who were most accomplished professionally, in an effort to ascertain how they overcame tremendous challenges and what contributed to their strength. This three-stage data-gathering process was recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) for use by qualitative researchers to "deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience that have been studied" (p. 12). It is the goal of this article to use Caribbean culture and elements of Black feminist lens to understand the interplay of race, gender, and class from their collective experience, and to work toward a better understanding of the experiences of Caribbean faculty women by removing the constructs of White (European) ideology.

Data Analysis

Black Feminist Theory is one basic elements of the framework used for this study.

> The underlying basis of Black feminist epistemology are mainly collective experiences and accompanying worldviews that Black women sustained based on our particular

> history… Black feminist thought offers two important contributions concerning the significance for a politics of empowerment. First, Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about unjust power relations. By embracing a paradigm on intersecting oppressions of race, class gender, sexuality, and nation, as well as Black women's individual and collective agency within them, Black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance. Second, Black feminist thought addresses ongoing epistemological debates concerning the power dynamics that underlie what counts as knowledge. Offering U.S. Black women new knowledge about our own experiences can be empowering. But activating epistemologies that criticize prevailing knowledge and that enable us to define our own realities *on our own terms* has far greater implications (Collins, 2000, p. 273-4).

Caribbean culture epistemology, along with Black Feminist Theory, will serve as the basic frameworks for analysis of the data. "Caribbean epistemology investigates the standards used to assess knowledge or why we believe what we believe to be true from the perspective of Caribbean culture. It points to the ways in which power relationships shape who is believed and why" (Collins, 2000, p. 252). It is only through the examination of Caribbean culture, tradition and structure that we can truly understand and appreciate the lives of Caribbean faculty women.

For this paper, I analyzed the open-ended survey and interview data looking for examples of the intersections of race, gender and class. In the first stage of data analysis, I examined the transcribed taped responses from the 44 face-to-face interviews, and the written transcriptions and research notes from the 6 in-depth interviews of greatly accomplished Caribbean faculty women. All interviews were audio-taped (oral narrative) and transcribed verbatim, giving the researcher the opportunity to use these narratives (Denzin, 1989; Willis, 1995) by reviewing them with a conscious eye to identify similarities and differences among the descriptions of lived experiences. The process of review was repeated numerous times until several themes emerged as central to the issue of Caribbean women's lives. Before the themes were interpreted through content analysis, an additional review was conducted to reveal the central ideas that appeared to illustrate collective experience[3] and the interconnectedness of themes focusing on race, gender and class (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In this process, various forms of race, gender and class oppression were identified through examples of responses from the transcribed interviews. To maintain the confidentiality of the Caribbean faculty interviewed, certain identifying information was excluded or generally specified in the text.

RESULTS

Background Information

The presented data are based on questionnaires, observations, and most importantly, detailed narratives transcribed by the researcher from face-to-face, individual interviews of forty-four Afro and Indo-Caribbean faculty women from the University of the West Indies located in Jamaica, Barbados, and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Respondents were from various disciplines, with ranks from lecturer to full professor. The sample also included a handful of women who had spent more than 20 years as faculty and were currently in administration, or on staff with a faculty line to a particular academic department teaching at least one class a year, in additional to their administrative or staff assignment. The researcher spent three weeks interviewing, holding focus groups, and observing faculty women on their respective campuses, and also made a few home visits for follow-up questions.

Contextualization of Caribbean Family Life and Culture

As I began to analyze the narrative responses, it became clear what cultural identity was perceived to be for Black women, or as one woman described: "as how we [meaning other Black women] see Blackness." Many of the women explained how they perceived their identities as Black women in the Caribbean. An Afro Caribbean replied:

> I think that for me, it has been important for me being a Black woman in Trinidad. It is strange because I think people see Blackness in many different ways. Many people see Blackness in terms of when they see themselves as the brunt of discrimination. They think we have been discriminated against because we are Black or people of other ethnic groups. But I do not think they see Blackness in terms of an affirmation of things African..... There is this whole denial and rejection of Africanism within our traditions, and at the same time, I recognize the right of other groups to affirm their identity..... The recognition of the sometimes, unconscious African behaviors and adaptations which exist in this society are not recognized as such, because they are forced to conform to a hostile environment. They often come up and appear in very problematic forms, but I think that is because they are not dealt with on their own terms.

It was apparent that being Black was a very important part of their lives and they were proud of their identity, culture and color. In addition, she recognized that there was a direct relationship between Carribean culture and African culture. Throughout my interviews with the 33 Caribbean faculty, I found that many of the women were cognizant of their racial and ethnic identities, especially for Indian women because as an ethnic minority in the Caribbean, they were not seen as part of the Caribbean mainstream, except perhaps in the Republic of Trinidad where they closely matched the numbers of Black West Indians[4] l the country. On the other hand, some non-Indian, Black women reported that they never considered being Black in those terms because in the Caribbean, Blacks greatly outnumbered Whites. One Afro Caribbean woman explained:

> There is a point when I take my Blackness as a given. I don't want you to misunderstand. It is important. I remember when I went to the United States to do my masters, I recognized that there were other people besides Black people. I mean, in a serious sense of it having an influence on my life. I knew there were White people and Indian people. But coming from a place where Black people are the majority of the population, this was just not an issue. I think that we have a style of living that is defined by Blackness or being Black. It is not an issue because I started from there. When I said I was a woman, I meant I was a Black woman but I didn't feel that I needed to say that I was a Black woman because I thought that was a given. It was only when I got to New York University (NYU), that I started running into trouble about my Blackness and having to explain things to professors and so on. What I did find when I came back from my sojourn in the United States is that my life took on a different context. I also returned being very hostile, not on a day-to-day basis but in terms of a kind of political strategy towards Whites, because I realized that a lot of the shit they were shoving in the Caribbean did not need to be like that. So I problematized my Blackness. I let it become an issue.

This Black Caribbean woman had clearly articulated earlier in our conversations that race was not an issue when she lived and worked in Barbados. However, as we began to explore her experiences abroad, especially her experiences living in New York City, the context of her conversation changed dramatically and she witnessed her racial and ethnic identity take on a whole new meaning. When she left the United States, she was angry and bitter at the way she had been treated by Whites and other Blacks. She became racially conscious for the first time in her life, and she began to critically analyze and question her professional experiences back home, especially in her administrative role. Her most powerful point was that she realized she had allowed her Blackness to become an issue when she returned to the islands from New York. During later conversations, she stated that she will forever be conscious of her Blackness, but she will no longer allow it to become an issue in her professional or personal life.

For Indo Caribbean women, being Indian in Trinidad meant being a minority and for the most part, considered lower-class as compared to Black Caribbean people. As discussed earlier, another cultural difference that is very unique to the Caribbean is the social stratification based primarily on a racial and ethnic hierarchy, but directly influenced by class and skin color, even within the races. Both Black and Indian people in the Caribbean vary in skin color, from very light-skinned to very dark-skinned. With all things being equal, the light-skinned and brown-skinned people were considered among the middle class, while the darker-skinned people were seen as the lower class. Whiteness of any origin, automatically placed that person at the top of the social class scale, just as a person being very dark-skinned would be placed at the bottom of the same scale. Although there were some limited mobility from the lower classes to the middle classes, it could only be circumvented by marrying a White person from outside the Caribbean society.

Traditional Indian practice was typically very strict and most women were brought up in very protective environments. As Indian women began to seek higher education and explore historical and traditional issues from a global perspective, some began to realize that the cultural constructs of race, class and gender were being interpreted from perspectives other than those from traditional Caribbean culture, such as the issues surrounding patriarchy and matrifocal families. One Indo Caribbean woman explained:

> In terms of being a woman and understanding womanhood, I would say that when I was in a very Indian, closed environment and then shifted into another full environment where I was mixed in, it brought into sharp focus the other kinds of aspects of gender that I would not have been aware of if I had grown up with it. For instance, a lot of the Caribbean is seen as matrifocal. That for me is a misnomer because my entire experience as an Indian in Trinidad has not been matrifocal. One of the problems we have in the Caribbean is that theory has always been received from somewhere else. Black feminism is what appeals most, but education has evolved and taken hold of some of the other theory that develops and transported it to your own society to illustrate how it operates. I don't think we have systematically done it.

Many women spoke to the fact that when women in the Caribbean are studied, their experiences are interpreted through the lens of mainstream and Eurocentric research paradigms and practices. However, as we have already discussed, while there are some similarities between the lives of Caribbean and other Black women throughout the Diaspora, there still remain several unique experiences of Caribbean women that cannot be shared with others. In my three-year research study for this paper, I struggled to find research on Caribbean women that was well-grounded in Caribbean culture and epistemology. The few studies I did find were located on the three University of the West Indies campuses in the bookstore, Institute for Social and Economic Research, the Women and Development Studies Project and the Centre for Gender and Development Studies. I hope this article will help to fill the void.

The majority of women who head households in the Caribbean have never been married, but have been in some type of male/female union previously. A female-headed household is considered one in which women retain control over her own income, assets, and over her children. The three most commonly recognized marital types as defined by the Caribbean census indicate unions to be declared as married (involving legal sanction and co-residence), common-law (involving co-residence only), and visiting (indicative of the birth of a child during the year preceding the census although the woman was not in a married or common-law union at the time of the census). Marriage in many Caribbean countries is based on common law, not wedlock. Generally, common law marriage is most prevalent among the working class, however, in some Caribbean islands is can also be found among the middle class, but to a much lesser degree. Collin's (1989) study revealed that professional Caribbean women reported having difficulty in finding professional Caribbean men interested in marriage.

Several of the women explained why they made conscious decisions to remain unmarried. When asked about her personal life, one Indo Caribbean faculty member stated:

> I'm not against marriage except that I've always reacted against it. My mother's marriage was a bit too confining for her. So I thought it would be too constricting for me. Also remembering that I would have been a teenager in that period, I would have married according to Indian custom. I am 41 now. My first strong relationship didn't start until I was 22 years old and it lasted for 15 years without any marriage. I recently entered another relationship and I haven't changed. That was my choice. That is not for everyone. I think that I am extremely individualistic in that sense and I don't feel that I have to be defined by someone else. I learned that I cannot have children, so this is not an issue for me now. Technically, I live alone, but I have a partner who is an artist and he has a small studio of his own in the house as well. So it is just the two of us.

Ninety percent of the Caribbean faculty women were in relationships, nearly a half were not married. Roughly a third of those who had married were widows. But the remainder of those who were married were mostly living apart from their spouse due to temporary (semester or year-long) professional appointments abroad or elsewhere within the Caribbean. Nearly eighty percent of those who were not married, were in committed relationships with a partner, usually residing within the same home. Less than 4 percent of the women had been divorced. Perhaps this may, in part, be explained by the fact that divorce is looked upon as a tragedy in Caribbean society, especially when children are involved (Braithwaite, 1975). Furthermore, because the middle class are typically small in numbers, the shear publicity and social criticism that divorce brings are often to great to bear for many couples. In addition, as a whole, Caribbean people and especially Caribbean women are very religious and therefore much less inclined to entertain the possibility of divorce unless under extreme circumstances. Historically, it was not until 1932 that there were any provisions for divorce in the Caribbean and adultery remained the sole grounds upon which divorce was permitted.

Another Afro Caribbean woman replied:

> In terms of relationships, I just wanted to say that I have a real problem with marriage. I conscientiously decided not to marry. And I don't have any plans to ever marry. It doesn't mean that I never will. But at the same time, I don't like to be seen as a pseudo-wife either. The role of wife is one that I really have problems with. The problem is that once you are in a relationship with someone, society casts you at least partially in that role anyway. But now that I have reached this age, I have been put under even more pressure from my friends, especially close women friends with families I about having a family. I am having second thoughts. This is a chore that I am going through right now. It is a chore. It is either now or never. This is my last chance. But

then I remember every time I think of it, like last year, I have to do it before..... I have to finish that last book before..... And then after that book was finished, it was something else. Then, I had to do it before the World Conference. Everything else has a priority over this. So I begin to wonder if I should really do it. You need energy and that's what I need. You need a lot of energy to be an academic and a woman.

The multiple roles that Caribbean faculty hold in their day-to-day professional and personal lives, are not reportedly much different from those of African American faculty women in the United States, with a few exceptions. First, there are a greater percentage of African American faculty women who are married, as compared to Caribbean faculty women as a whole. Second, in a traditional African American household, as are true of most American households, the division of family work is an important issue because many families are supported by dual-career couples. In order to maintain a successful household, research reports that dual career couples in the United States tend to hold egalitarian relationships where both spouses compromise by sharing parental and family responsibilities within the home (Gregory, 1999). However, women still tend to carry the greatest burden of household tasks in the United States because they are the primary caregiver and considered primarily responsible for her children and family. In comparison, many Caribbean women are not married and while some are in either common law or committed relationships, the culture prescribes that women are the sole caregivers of her children, especially in less affluent families that are less likely to have a wage-earning partner and unable to afford household help. Third, the social hierarchy for Black women academics in the United States are generally not based on class or skin color. In other words, all things being equal, if a dark-skinned Black woman and a light-skinned Black women were competing for the same job and they both had similarly equal credentials, the fact that one was lighter-skinned than the other would probably not be a deciding factor. Finally, while virtually all Research I institutions in the United States require that faculty publish and present papers at professional conferences, very few of these institutions offer adequate funding for travel, book purchases, technological equipment or other items needed to pursue an active research agenda. In stark comparison, the overwhelming majority of the 44 women in the Caribbean study stated that they received an average of seven thousand U.S. dollars each year for unrestricted travel and professional costs associated with their positions at the University. Furthermore, these women and faculty men for that matter, were encouraged to travel abroad, take sabbaticals, and seek professional opportunities. A third of the women I interviewed had received at least one of their three or more degrees from an institution abroad and more than half had traveled around the globe an average of 5 times within the past 10 years. As the most recent narrative illustrates, it takes a lot of energy and work to be an academic woman because we continue to grapple with the demands of our families, the responsibilities of our job, the commitment to our communities, and the need to stay actively abreast and involved, and well-read in our discipline.

It has been argued that in the Caribbean, the female labor force tends to be stronger than in other parts of the 'so-called' developing world, primarily because family structure is such an important consideration

(Barrow, 1996). The faculty women who participated in this study had been able to capitalize on the advantages provided by improved educational opportunities which allowed them to enter the formal sector of the labor force and pursue university degrees. Even non-professional Caribbean women have traditionally engaged in money-making activities, whether it was paid employment, producing and selling goods, or running their own businesses. The Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) data indicates that women choose whether or not to seek an economic livelihood and what kind of economic activity, on the basis of realistic assessments of their own employability, the required output in terms of time and energy, the alternative arrangements that would have to be made to carry out their household and child care responsibilities, and the expected value of the income to be earned (Barrow, 1996). Often times when the returns were not perceived to be advantageous and the woman can engineer alternative sources of livelihood, she would opt out of the workforce altogether. Where she is unable to develop such alternatives, she opted for a lower occupation, even if the returns were not advantageous. It is referred to as 'making do.' According to Barrow (1996), at its most basic level, women consider work to be any activity which is functionally necessary to maintain themselves, their professional work, and their households (which usually includes the rearing of children, completion of chores, and caring for elderly family members).

Experiencing Race, Gender, and Class Discrimination in Academia

Collins (2000) and Crenshaw (1995) both refer to various forms of 'intersecting oppressions,' such as race, gender, class and ethnicity. Collins contends that these intersecting oppressions are of greater importance than race alone for Caribbean women. Intersectional paradigms are based on the premise that oppressions work together to produce injustice and inequality. They do not often work individually in isolation. According to Collins, intersectional paradigms are important because they stimulate new interpretations of the experiences of Black women throughout the Caribbean and African Diaspora.

Comparatively, academic women from Jamaica, Barbados and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago do differ in several respects. In terms of professional characteristics, faculty women from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago were least likely to obtain tenure the first time around. The four academic disciplines most represented in the study were Biology, Social Science, Sociology, and Literature. Jamaican faculty women had the highest job satisfaction rate and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago had the lowest. In Jamaica, the Mona campus was by far the largest of the three and therefore had greater on-site resources. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is the farthest island in the Caribbean Sea located just off the tip of Caracas, Venezuela and is somewhat isolated. When asked to identify obstacles to professional achievement, faculty women from Jamaica and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago both cited research inequities, while Barbados faculty reported academic climate. Barbados is one of the wealthiest (per capita) islands in the Caribbean and is relatively small. When asked which factors they considered most important for individual success and achievement, integrity was most often cited as their first or second choice and professional reputation along with scholarship rounded out the most common second and third

choices. Family life was reported fourth. The most common variable of job satisfaction was unanimously a sense of accomplishment, followed by personal autonomy, and support for teaching. In terms of salary, Barbadian faculty women were paid the greatest and faculty from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago were paid nearly 40 percent less. However, faculty women from Barbados were most likely to have tenure and therefore have higher salaries. In addition, the cost of living difference between Barbados and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was as significant as comparing the cost of living between California and Mississippi, or Monte Carlo and London, respectively. The Barbados dollar was also much stronger, although the unemployment rate for women in Barbados was highest when compared to the Republic of Trinidad Tobago and Jamaica, 22.9, 21 and 22 percent respectively. Not surprisingly, every faculty woman from Barbados had household help (100 percent) and spent the least amount of time on household chores (23 hours a week as compared to 26 and 31 hours, respectively). Women from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago were most likely to have dependents (87.5 percent, as compared to 54 and 64 percent) and most likely to be married (93.8 percent, as compared to 23 and 54 percent).

Race

The issue of race as stated previously, is not an important issue for Afro Caribbean women. However, it becomes a very important issue for Indo Caribbean women because it directly intersects with class. One Afro Caribbean woman who had spent some time in England relied:

> As a professional, I find that race is not as important in Jamaica as it is elsewhere. It is in a sense, but I think I have always sort of recognized that race can be a limiting factor. I just did the best that I could. In fact, the first time I really felt the problem of my race was when I went to live in England. I lived in England for 3 years after I got married. My awareness of color and race and the fact that it can determine life choices, began with my experience in England. And in fact, my husband was studying law in England and he was offered a job when he completed his law degree. That job would have enabled us to stay and live in England, but we made a conscientious decision not to stay because of the racism we encountered. We had a baby at the time and decided we did not want him to grow up in that society, so we came back to Jamaica. We wanted him to grow up in a healthy society.

Similar to the experiences of the Black Caribbean faculty member discussed earlier who was residing in New York to complete her doctorate degree, this Black professor had faced the same racism in England. Her experiences in England were especially troubling because she was physically attacked on the streets of England one day, based solely on the color of her skin, which is very light-brown. Unlike the faculty woman in New York, this respondent recognized that race could be an issue, but it was not until she went to England that she became intimately conscious of its presence. When she returned to the Caribbean, she did not become angry or "problematize" her Blackness. She simply compartmentalized her isolated

experience in England and made a conscious decision not to return. She has since traveled to Europe and elsewhere abroad, but has not faced the same type of hatred during her travels. In her last sentence, she discussed her concerns about choosing to return to the Caribbean so her son could grow up in a healthy environment. This was a critical issue for her because she came from a middle-class home where her parents were married and very strict. Her sister had died in a tragic accident and her parents were especially protective over the children, so much so that after the death of her sister, her mother rarely left the children in the care of others. The African American faculty woman further shared that she waited until her children had started to school to go back to work. Her children were and continue to be her first priority. Even now, she said she finds herself increasingly torn between her responsibilities of her job and the growing needs of her elderly parents. Her children are now all grown and have advanced professional and academic degrees.

Gender

Many gender-specific issues included actual and perceived family/career tensions. Caplan (1993) captured the dilemma many women feel about acknowledging their motherhood or care-taker responsibilities for elder parents. "A woman who refuses to take a job because it would mean living apart from her partner, children, or elderly family members doesn't take her job seriously, but a woman who is prepared to make such a move is uncaring and unwomanly" (Caplan, p. 67).

In addition, because some of the women were passionately engaged in gender development research from a Black perspective, they were constantly challenging the dominant paradigms through their interest in new kinds of research. This called greater attention to both their gender and race. One middle-class, Afro Caribbean woman stated:

> It just never occurred to me that just because I was a woman, I couldn't do anything. And my parents always gave me that feeling also. There was nothing that I could not do if I worked hard enough for it. In a sense, that was something that grew with me. I have been very fortunate because I was able to take advantage of opportunities that other people could not, although my parents afforded it at great sacrifice.

Another Afro Caribbean woman explained her dilemma:

> The university is very careful about things. You assume that something is happening because you are a woman. It is very difficult to prove because some of the men who are very insensitive about gender relations, are also the men who respect me a lot because of my political science work. They wish I was working in political science research rather than this 'damn feminist thing.' Since I had worked and done some good political science research, they kind of figured that I was good and that I probably just had this 'feminist bug' in my head. I think they see this as a deviation that they wish would go away.

As Reddock (1988) points out, "Like race, it [gender] is a conceptual understanding of a social reality which transforms our very perception of class" (p. 3).

Class

As I began to analyze the collective responses, it became clear that many racial descriptions were made by physical appearance (primarily skin color) and country of origin (family lineage). Color played an enormous role in the lives of more than half the respondents. In fact, after reviewing the recorded narratives, only two respondents discussed race without referring to class. But all respondents except one addressed the issue of class at some point throughout our conversations. The primary characteristics of class were defined by most respondents as race being a physical thing and class as determined primarily by family heritage and skin color. One Indo Caribbean woman explains:

> As an Indian woman in Jamaica, I felt that I would liked to have lived where it was different. You are not really known here. I suppose in a sense it is very different being Indian in Jamaica and I think we are very Jamaican. To be a Trinidad Indian is different because we have been a lot less assimilated than in Jamaica. There are many more Indians here in Trinidad so there is much more context than Jamaica, where the Indians look like they are from India. In Jamaica, you have class and color. Because my Indian parents trained here, we were in a lower class category and were not able to do certain things, such as drive a car. In Trinidad, it would be different. We would just be another middle-class Indian. In Jamaica, you begin to categorize by color and ethnicity. Here it is different.

The intercultural differences between Indians and Blacks in the Caribbean are greatest when they move from a country where they are the ethnic majority to a country where they become the ethnic minority. As stated earlier, Jamaica is predominately Black, while the Republic of Trinidad-Tobago has roughly equal numbers of Black and Indian residents. Therefore, within the Caribbean social structure, one would expect an Indian woman coming from a generously populated Indian country and going to a predominately Black populated country, to experience issues with regards to class. However, in the academy professional academics seem to overlook this feminine thing and concentrate on the quality of the work. While this might not be the standard, the women did not report feeling as though they had been discriminated against on the basis of race and ethnicity. However, a few of the women did speak to possible incidents of age discrimination.

Ageism

One of the women shared a story about how relatively young she looked when she first began teaching college students. She stated that she felt she may have been discriminated against based on her youthful looks. An Afro Caribbean woman from Trinidad stated:

I'm sure that I have encountered discrimination. I know I have been discriminated against by age, because I know that although I'm older now, I have always looked young. People always treated me like a child. I was always trying to look mature, especially when I went to teach those older students. I remember once there was this older man in my class. We went on a field trip and he threw me in the river. I was mortified because I thought it was such a lack of respect but he thought it was so funny. This was his idea of fun, to throw me in the river in front of his other classmates. I was horrified. In a way, I suppose if I wasn't so concerned about exercising my authority because I was so much younger than all my students, I wouldn't have been so mortified. I often feel that I have little evidence of that [discrimination] in terms of being placed on the salary scales. I think when I came back [to Trinidad] and was placed on the salary scale, it was lower than most men with my credentials. And I think it happened because when I came into this job, I looked so young. They can't discriminate in big ways because it is too obvious, but I tend to get those small discriminations. .

Of all 44 Caribbean women in the study, only two reported that they perceived themselves as being discriminated against based on age. The first Black woman who we heard from above felt that because she looked young, she was perceived as inexperienced so she was not treated fairly. Another faculty member was an older Indian woman teaching in the hard sciences. She stated that in her department, she was the only female, the third eldest in a relatively large department, and one of two non-white faculty, the other being a Black man. She reported feeling very isolated, rejected, and alone. Most of the younger faculty were securing large grants and she was one of the few faculty members in her department that were not included on any of the numerous departmental grants. She attributed her non-inclusion primarily as age discrimination and secondly as gender discrimination. The average age of the Caribbean faculty women in this study was 49 years old, as compared to 50 years old for African American faculty women.

Black feminist scholarship has argued that in order to survive and succeed, Black women must develop a 'multiple consciousness' in their everyday lives (Collins, 1989, 2000). They further recognize that the effects of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression are not just additional oppressions that affect Black women, but rather several, simultaneous oppressions that multiply when combined. Usually, the result is an increased level of consciousness to how these oppressions interactively affect Black women's lives (King, 1988). In some cases, respondents 'multiple consciousness' were not clear as to whether a specific negative experience was caused by their gender, class, age, or race, as illustrated by the most recent narrative above. Also, when asked when respondents first became aware of racism and other ism's in their professional academic setting, most replied by stating that they recognized discrimination only after they were removed from their country, such as the case for the Afro Caribbean woman from Jamaica who lived in England, the Indo Caribbean woman who grew up in Trinidad but was working in Jamaica, and the Afro Caribbean woman from Barbados who attending school at New York University. For

these women, dealing with various forms of oppression became second nature, and the women learned to act differently among different groups of people to survive. These are common coping strategies for all women on color and are not unique to Caribbean women.

Care-giving, Claiming Space and Negotiating Careers

The demands of caring for elderly parents were typical concerns for Caribbean women. One Afro Caribbean professor stated:

> I think the main conflict I feel is really that of being a daughter. I think my mother brought us up to be very independent, but she is at a time now when she needs a lot of attention. It has also been very traumatic for me and I have also had to come to terms with myself by the fact that I have probably not been spending enough time with her, not making allowances for her or adapting to the changes that are happening in her life.

Another Indo Caribbean professor expressed the same concern when she said:

> Strangely enough, the greatest conflict I have now is taking care of my aging parents. I have increasing work demands because of the stage in my career, and I feel the tremendous pressure of my parents and mother-in-law making demands on me. These demands cannot be delegated to other members of my family because I am the only child here in Jamaica, so I have to face up to them and often I really get torn.

Because the average age of the 44 Caribbean faculty women in this study was 49 years old, relatively comparable to age 50 for the study of 384 African American faculty women (Gregory, 1999), caring for elderly parents was equally as important as the rearing of children for Caribbean faculty women. In addition, nearly half of the women were either living elsewhere in the Caribbean than their parents or in-laws, or were the only child remaining in the area where their parents or in-laws resided. This cause tremendous challenges for them as they took on increased administrative responsibilities, were offered more attractive opportunities abroad, and were less restricted by child care responsibilities because many of the children were grown.

In addition, almost a quarter of these academic women perceived barriers to career advancement, such as personal factors, inability to manage role sets, personal demands of family, and limited upward mobility opportunities within the current institution. These barriers only influenced some of these women to seek other opportunities if they were prepared to leave the Caribbean. Although they may have sought more attractive career opportunities elsewhere, most accepted alternative administrative posts or a combination of teaching and administrative positions within their current institution. As stated before, since Caribbean scholars are able to apply for tenure more than once at the same institution, they are less likely to leave after being denied tenure the first time, although they may be at a disadvantage. In this study, 25 percent of

the Caribbean faculty women had been denied tenure at least once, but chose to remain at the institution and try again. The mobility rate for Caribbean scholars was relatively low, which may possibly be explained in part because Caribbean faculty had the opportunity to go up for tenure more than once, although they often have little choice of academic institutions unless they choose to leave the Caribbean altogether.

Caribbean faculty women reported receiving greater resources for teaching and research but experienced similar events with regard to the existence of supportive colleagues. As one Indian woman stated:

> Being very ethnic, I was often alone. I never had anyone to talk to the way that you would with other colleagues. Being Indian, I rarely had anyone that I could share ideas with and whom I had similar experiences with as a woman.

For Caribbean faculty women, there was less of a concern regarding scholarship because there was a common understanding of which journals were more competitive and rigorous. However, a few Caribbean women who published pieces on gender development did report experiencing difficulty in gaining respect from some of their male counterparts, especially early on. The primary source of stress among Afro and Indo Caribbean women were derived primarily from their experiences of classism and sexism within their academic workplace.

When asked what were the main priorities in their lives, most women spoke about contributing significantly to their profession through research and community service, spending more quality time with family, and taking care of older parents. One Afro Caribbean woman said:

> I think one of my main priorities is wanting to make an outstanding academic intellectual contribution. I want to be a first class mother and I want to live well, comfortably and differently than the traditional box many women are put into. I don't want to be conventional. I want to redefine womanhood through my living. Just the freedom to be. Just to expand the boundaries of what being a woman is. What is excepted as being a woman in the Caribbean.

Many of the women expressed the need to 'do it all well' without simply 'making do.' Being a good mother and a respected academic were their top priorities. However, other obligations such as caring for elderly parents, illness, rare short-term opportunities abroad, and department responsibilities forced them to renegotiate their priorities. Nearly a quarter of the women, such as the one above, spoke to the need to march to a different drum; their own drum. Roughly a third of the women in this study were in some way affiliated with the Centre for Gender Development Studies and half of those were either teaching courses or actively conducting research in women's studies. Before women's studies became fashionable, the women pursuing this line of research exploration and inquiry came under attack from mainstream colleagues and

researchers who questioned the relevance, quality and importance of the research. As a result, some experienced difficulty getting work published, were not supported well by funding and were sometimes outcasts in their own departments. Now, however, the department is well established on all three campuses and is meticulously and effectively directed by accomplished, strong women who have helped to legitimize gender studies in the eyes of academia. By 'expanding the boundaries' as the respondent stated, women in the Caribbean are free to explore areas that at one time were taboo. Now, 'what is accepted' is less a matter of what others deem as relevant as it is what can be articulated through a new, gender specific epistemology that effectively considers the lives of women in the Caribbean and throughout the Diaspora. In support of this contention, a quarter of the women stated how much they valued and appreciated their ability to maintain autonomy through research and pedagogy, which was not possible just a decade ago.

An Afro Caribbean senior faculty member similarly stated:

> My top priorities in life are my children. Throughout everything they have always been the most important. I would never have started my academic life if it did not fit into my family life. I make no apologies for that. Try and raise three children who would be good citizens, contribute to society without being a burden upon it. I felt that to be a major priority. Now that they are all off, I think that I am looking at some personal satisfaction through my work and some opportunities to do some research that I have wanted to do but did not have the time.

Through the voices of Afro and Indo Caribbean faculty women, we have used Caribbean culture and Black Feminist Thought as a conceptual framework to examine the positions that Black women occupy and illustrate how they negotiate their responsibilities for themselves, the family, and their careers. We have also learned that culture is quite different for Indo and Afro Caribbean faculty women, and experiences vary based primarily on color, race and class.

Continued Struggles

Many women expressed great concern over conflicts due to marital obligations, childrearing responsibilities, and time constraints. This was the case for one Indo Caribbean woman:

> I think sometimes as a spouse, I experienced some conflict with my life roles. Let's say if I need to go to a meeting, I needed to separate from my parents, or my family for a period of time. I think I feel a little bit of guilt leaving them behind. There was a time I remember when there was conflict between my husband and myself where both us had meetings. He had to go to Tahiti and I had a meeting in Grenada. One of us had to stay behind. I ended up to staying behind. As a parent, sometimes I feel conflict between my work and my children.

During the course of our discussion, she added the caveat:

> I think I am not spending enough time with them as I should, but I think that is a personal decision. I know some of my colleagues consciously make decisions to spend time with their children. I find that I get so busy. I don't spend the time that I should. I think I missed it and am not as supportive of my children as I should be or could be. When they demand it, I give it to them, but I don't constantly share myself with them. I don't think I can say that they needed me at any one point in time and I did not give them the time that they needed. I think that I sense when they need me, I give them my time. I give them what they need, but the additional extra time that I would do and I think should do or need to do, I tend to neglect a bit.

Another Afro Caribbean woman expressed a similar concern:

> What has been my greatest impediment is that I have had to do all of my work here at this campus. I have not had the opportunity to be part of other institutions or even be a full graduate scholar at another institution, spending 6 months doing lecturing or research, or another direction with colleagues to get that type of exposure. It is because of family concerns. I would not leave them with 3 children and I could not take them with me. Now I know I can't leave because of my parents. It was a matter of choice and I just couldn't do it. I did a visiting fellowship at the International Institute for Educational Planning in France for a month and I did a traveling fellowship visiting educational institutions in the U.S. information service. It just wet my appetite to do more and that was just a month. I think the fact that I put a priority on family, limited the possibilities for expansion of my career.

The voices of these Black and Indian Caribbean faculty women speak volumes about how they came to understand the impact race, gender, and class had on their lives and how these statuses have altered their career paths and choices. Many women spoke about accepting their statuses as a given, but working hard to do the best they could because they were convinced that with hard work and dedication, they would be successful. This determination and tenacity was not something they were trained to do. Some women made special reference to their early socialization in terms of sources of self-worth and social support. Such was the case for one Afro Caribbean woman as she spoke about what was expected of her growing up and how she knew things would just work out. This paper illustrates the fact that Black (Indo and Afro) Caribbean women face multiple forms of marginalization, but yet they have developed successful strategies for addressing them.

CONCLUSION

The pioneering work of Wiltshire-Brodber (1988) serves to document the stereotyped perceptions of Caribbean women from Jamaica, Barbados and Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and illustrated the danger of basing social analyses on stereotypes.

> We need instead to begin examining the realities of (Caribbean) women's lives in the family beyond the stereotypes, categories, and labels which have so far dominated the thinking on the family and the roles which women perform in the (University of the West Indies) institution" (Mohammed, 1992, p. 179).

One of the Indo-Caribbean faculty women said so eloquently:

> The search only ends when the researcher is convinced that one's voice is a close approximation from the truth.

According to hooks (1989) "As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their own history," (p, 42). Through this paper, my goal was to validate the experiences and stories of these women scholars who struggle each day--both within the classroom and in other academic and personal environments—to have their 'truths' heard rather than muted, as they fight for their rightful place in the academy. It is apparent that without:

> Tapping into nontraditional sources, such as transcriptions and observations, much of Black women's intellectual tradition would remain "not known and hence not believed in" (Williams, 1987, p. 150).

The findings in this study are critical to understanding how race, class, and gender identities, individually and collectively influence how we understand the world in which we live. It is also important to consider the longstanding debate centering around standpoint theory, which takes to task the issue of whether or not a woman's racial identity separates her from other women whose gendered identities are not shaped by the social construct of race. I would argue that racial identity does separate women, however, their gendered identity establishes a common ground that allows them to share a socially constructed reality. Through the in-depth interviews with Afro and Indo Caribbean faculty women who were from different ethnic groups but the same race, the researcher discovered the unique ability of these women to negotiate their identities as they shared their perceptions and interpretations of daily academic life as Black and Indian faculty women.

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NOTES

[1] The term 'coloured' is the British word used in the Caribbean and it the same as the term for 'colored' or Black in America.

[2] The Centre for Gender and Development Studies grew out of Women and Development Studies groups on the three campuses of the University of the West Indies. With programme support from the Ford Foundation and the Government of the Netherlands, these groups developed a teaching and research project in collaboration with the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague as well as with the Institute of Social and Economic Studies on the Cave Hill, Mona and St. Augustine campuses. This project led to the establishment in 1993 of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies. Besides research, it conducts an energetic programme of seminars and workshops which increases awareness of gender issues in the academic community, as well as in the wider society.

3 Ladson-Billings (1994) has observed that by "talking with" rather than "talking to" other Black women, Black women have the opportunity to deconstruct the specificity of their own experiences and make connections with the collective experiences of others. The give and take of dialogue makes struggling together for meaning a powerful experience in self-definition and self-discovery (p. 155).

4 The term "West Indian" is used interchangeably with the term "Caribbean," referring to native Caribbean residents.

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